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The American Association of Museums, whose membership includes art, history, science, natural history, youth museums, zoos, arboretums, botanical gardens, aquariums, planetariums, science-technology centers and art centers, adopted the following statement on federal support of museums at its 73rd annual meeting last May. The statement continues to represent the basic position of the association:

"The nation's museums constitute an irreplaceable cultural and educational resource. They preserve our heritage, interpret our aspirations and stimulate our imaginations. They perform a wide range of invaluable services that benefit our entire society.

"For more than a decade, the many member institutions and professionals of the American Association of Museums have benefited greatly from the funding programs provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Museum Act, National Science Foundation and other federal agencies. In addition to helping financially, these programs, which were developed and administered with assistance from the museum profession, provided leadership for the field and recognition of the increasingly important role of museums.

"The recent creation of the Institute of Museum Services has added a new dimension to federal funding of museums by providing general operating and other broad-based support for museums.

"The association wishes to express its sincere appreciation to the Congress and executive branch for their confidence and support. This continuing federal commitment has helped museums to meet increasing demands for services and

face accelerating costs. This federal initiative also has encouraged museums to seek additional support from private sources and state and local governments.

"The success of these federal programs can be attributed largely to the flexible response by partici-

pating agencies to the expanding needs of museums within the broad context of each agency's mandate. The American Association of Museums feels it is essential to continue to have a complementary program of federal support involving a number of funding sources and programs. It should be recognized that, as with universities and other kinds of institutions, a certain degree of interrelated programming and funding is necessary and desirable because of the multidisciplinary nature of museum activities.

"The goals, programs and funding of museums are as diverse as are the communities that they serve. This diversity is one of the strengths of museums. Pluralistic federal support has been—and should continue to be—a significant factor in improving and expanding museum services.

"As an organization serving all museums and their publics, the American Association of Museums pledges its considerable resources in the development and articulation of policies and programs which aid museums."

Federal support for museums falls into three principal categories. The first is broad social, educational and economic programs in which museums participate with other institutions and units of state and local government (e.g., the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act and public works construction assistance). The second category includes programs of support for cultural institutions, two with identified programs for

museums—the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities—and one that only indirectly supports some types of museum programs—the National Science Foundation. Finally, there are two programs that offer support exclusively to museums and museum-related organizations—the Institute of Museum Services and the National Museum Act.

With regard to the first category, it is important to note that the principal purpose of these programs is not to aid directly the institutions taking advantage of

them, but to accomplish other primary purposes, for example, providing jobs during times of recession or providing special education opportunities for disadvantaged people. These programs are generally open to a variety of educational, health, cultural, social and other eleemosynary organizations, in addition to state and local governments. Each program, of course, has a specific definition of

eligible participants. Often, museums can and should be among those eligible groups. Too often, however, museums do not participate because they are not considered when legislation and regulations are being developed.

As a case in point, the National Energy Conservation Policy Act includes hospitals and educational institutions as groups eligible for federal funding to permit implementation of programs to conserve energy, including renovating facilities and purchasing new equipment. The goal of the legislation is to reduce the amount of energy consumed nationally and to insure adequate energy supplies even in times of national shortages. Museums are not included in this legislation, even though their facilities are considerable and the amount of energy consumed is substantial. More important, it is essential that minimum environmental conditions be maintained, even in time of an energy crisis, if irreparable loss to the nation's

patrimony, which is entrusted to our museums, is to be prevented.

Response to Federal Council Questions

1. *What are the financial or other needs of American museums that most appropriately warrant federal assistance?*

Museums carry out their responsibilities through collection, preservation, study, interpretation/exhibition and education. *Each of these functions is interrelated and is dependent upon all of the others.*

It is impossible to serve the public today if adequate resources are not available to develop and carry out programs of interpretation, exhibition and education.

Likewise, museums will be ill prepared to serve the future public if resources are not currently available to collect, preserve and study.

Support for these basic functions of museums is of three types: capital funding, general operating funds, and program and project support. Museums are the institutions in our society that are responsible for preserving and transmitting art, history and science through objects, experiences and programs involving the public. This responsibility involves interrelated capital, general operating, and program and project expenses and meeting this responsibility necessarily calls for adequate financial support in each of these areas.

The goal for museums and those supporting museums, including the federal government, should be to insure that sufficient resources are available so that museums can satisfy their total obligations to the public. In fact, in the last several years museums have had to postpone critically needed activities in the areas of collection, conservation and research. They have also cut back on the services offered to the public; parts of museums have been closed and special education programs curtailed, all at a time when the public is demanding more services.

2. *Do federal programs, as currently constituted, meet those needs?*

The legislative mandates of the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Science Foundation, Institute of Museum Services and National Museum Act are sufficiently broad to provide for the development of comprehensive programs of support that could be responsive to the needs of all types of museums. It must be said, however, that there is grave concern that the current evolving definitions and programs are not responsive to the full range of museum disciplines and types. Federal programs have not developed or received sufficient funding to respond to the dramatic growth of museums, especially in their service to the public.

Additional support is needed to meet pressing needs in many areas of museum responsibilities not now addressed by federal programs.

As trustees of the nation's patrimony, museums need federal support, not only to help alleviate financial constraints, but as an incentive to expand existing sources and develop new sources of private financial support and to help maintain and improve public recognition of the role, importance and needs of museums. A federal commitment of many times the amount now available for support of museums would represent only a small fraction of the resources museums need if they are to fulfill their obligations to society.

3. *Are the limited federal museum assistance resources being applied efficiently and equitably?*

Federal programs of assistance to museums are in an evolutionary stage and therefore do not, as yet, serve all types of museums equitably. In this context we commend to the Federal Council the presentations of the museum organizations that represent specific disciplines and types of museums. Those responsible for the development and administration of federal programs of support for museums have been conscientious and concerned about the needs of the museum community.

Increased attention should be given to communication with the museum community before actions are taken to redefine existing policies or adopt new ones. Changes in policies must be communicated clearly to the museum community. Only if museum professionals feel that they understand and can rely on the administration of federal programs in support of museums

will the federal support be most effective and only then will all of the constituents believe the programs to be equitable.

4. *Are there ways to streamline administrative practices in federal museum programs to better serve the museum community?*

In general, federal museum programs are well administered. As programs develop and experience

is gained in their administration, attention should be given to simplifying and reducing the amount of information required of applicants. Federal agencies should examine how they can rely on the profession's own evaluations, including the AAM Accreditation Program and technical assistance programs of other service organizations.

As experience is gained and programs refined efforts should be made to provide support on a multi-year basis. This will allow museums to plan and use their resources to the greatest advantage.